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SUBJECT: POLITICAL ROUNDUP: BHUTTO CAMPAIGNING; MUSHARRAF  
CASE CONTINUES; U.S. GROUP ASSESSES ELECTION CLIMATE

REF: ISLAMABAD 4271

Classified By: DCM Peter Bodde for Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary: Despite ongoing security concerns, Pakistan People's Party leader Benazir Bhutto announced October 25 that she would travel to Larkhana on October 27 where tens of thousands are expected to welcome her. Pakistan's Supreme Court continues to hear the case against Musharraf's re-election. Meanwhile, the U.S.'s National Democratic Institute (NDI), led by former Senator Tom Daschle, conducted a pre-election assessment and noted complaints by opposition parties, media and civil society. The NDI group publicly chided the GOP and urged greater "transparency." End summary.

Another Homecoming for Bhutto  
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12. (C) People's Party (PPP) leader Benazir Bhutto announced October 25 that she would return to her family's ancestral village of Larkhana on Saturday (October 27). Tens of thousands of party supporters are expected to greet her and line the highway from the airport to this village in the heart of Sindh. The GOP will provide security, but Bhutto clearly does not fully trust this protection. We hear about 500 PPP staff/volunteers will supplement her security circle.

Musharraf Case Part II  
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13. (U) An 11-justice panel of Pakistan's Supreme Court began hearing arguments October 18 against President Musharraf's October 6 re-election. Two opposition presidential candidates -- the legal fraternities' Supreme Court Justice (retired) Wajihuddin Ahmed and People's Party (PPP) President Makhdoom Amin Faheem -- have brought the principal petitions arguing that Musharraf should have been disqualified from running because he still serves as Chief of Army Staff (reftel).

14. (C) The Court rejected similar arguments September 28. Even on this specific case, the Court has already ruled against petitioners' motions -- to stay the presidential election (October 5) and for a full 17-member bench hearing (October 17). Pro-government Justice Javed Iqbal has been left to preside over a smaller panel, which court watchers characterize as having four solid Musharraf backers, but also four likely Musharraf dissenters. A pro-Musharraf majority, however slim, is widely predicted. The case is expected to last for about another week.

## U.S. Group Urges Transparency

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15. (U) Meanwhile, in preparation for the general elections anticipated early January 2008, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) concluded October 21 its pre-election assessment mission led by former U.S. Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle. After five days of meetings with the GOP, political parties, media and civil society, the U.S. group voiced its concerns in a public statement.

16. (U) The NDI delegation put forward 21 recommendations for action by Pakistan's Election Commission (ECP), the police, and the GOP more generally, as well as by the political parties. The recommendations touch upon issues of election integrity, governance, electoral rights, and election coordination and observation. NDI's public statement said that the GOP must take "urgent steps" to contain political violence, produce an accurate voters' list, curtail security agencies' interference in the electoral process, involve all party leaders, and protect the rights of women voters.  
PATTERSON